

Rep. Bairds Meth Advice Sought by Administration (November 4, 2005)

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird, a national leader in the anti-meth fight, today sent the following letter to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Director John Walters in response to Director Walters' request for Congressman Baird's input into the 2006 National Drug Control Strategy.

It is no coincidence that everywhere across the United States, articles are written virtually every day on the impact of meth on our country and on our communities," Congressman Baird wrote in the letter. "The citizens of this country are concerned about methamphetamine and they are demanding action."

Congressman Baird recommended ONDCP:

- ?Maintain or increase funding for law enforcement programs like COPS that target meth
- ?Facilitate communication between local and regional narcotics task forces and federal agencies
- ?Communicate meth treatment research results to local treatment centers in every state
- ?Retain or expand the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs
- ?Support implementing lower federal limits on retail sales of pseudoephedrine
- ?Focus increased attention on disrupting the international synthetic drug market
- ?Track the international production and shipment of pseudoephedrine more efficiently
- ?Support his plan to focus narcotics intelligence resources on addressing foreign and domestic meth production and trafficking

The comprehensive Meth Elimination Act Congressman Baird introduced in September received consideration in a House Judiciary Subcommittee last week and is on track to be signed into law by year's end. In July, Congressman Baird secured an additional \$54 million to help law enforcement fight the spread of meth and secure our borders against meth traffickers. Congressman Baird co-founded the bipartisan Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine in 2000. Prior to coming to Congress, Congressman Baird was a clinical psychologist who worked with meth addicts, learning firsthand the destructive potential of the drug.

November 4, 2005

The Honorable John P. Walters

Director

Office of National Drug Control Policy

750 17th Street, N.W.

Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Walters:

As you prepare the 2006 National Drug Control Strategy, I want to thank you for taking into consideration the insights and concerns of myself and my colleagues. The views and comments laid out in this letter are meant to supplement views I strongly support as sent by the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine and the Congressional Rural Caucus. I know that you will find connective ideas between all of the letters you receive and I appreciate your observance of these similarities.

Since January 2005, more bills have been introduced on the subject of methamphetamine than were in both sessions of the 108th Congress. This issue has the attention of various caucuses in both the House and Senate and has been the subject of numerous briefings in both chambers. It is no coincidence that everywhere across the United States, articles are written virtually every day on the impact of meth on our country and on our communities. The citizens of this country are concerned about methamphetamine and they are demanding action.

Below I have provided some supplemental views on the current Strategy and ways in which we can improve the Strategy in 2006.

Domestic Coordination and Enforcement Needs

The 2006 National Drug Control Strategy should reflect the concerns and realities of the country. The purity of methamphetamine on the street is more potent than ever and domestic meth lab seizures are only slightly down from the previous year's figures. Now is not the time to diminish federal resources dedicated to states in the form of COPS, Byrne-JAG, and HIDTA programs. I urge you to work with Congress to maintain or increase funding for these important programs.

I also encourage you to facilitate stronger communication between local or regional narcotics task forces and federal agencies as well as promote the sharing of intelligence and resources. Improved coordination would only serve to benefit both parties, and it is my understanding that present coordination with local law enforcement has been slowly degrading over the years. One of the themes in the President's Strategy is to attack the drug trade as a business. In treating the drug trade as a business, we must then look to our local task forces as the primary source for gathering information about the customer. The better we can identify the preferences and behaviors of customers, the better we can understand the market.

Treatment & Prevention

The Administration's support for research on the physical and psychological effects of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs and the dissemination of best practices to our communities, particularly our rural treatment centers, has been woefully inadequate and slow in moving.

Fortunately, the Administration has begun to approach research and treatment objectives comprehensively, recently announcing the expansion of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Targeted Capacity Expansion grants (TCE), the establishment of a National Resource Center to provide technical assistance to state and local Child Protective Services agencies to improve their prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and additional funding to NIDA for methamphetamine-related research. I applaud these efforts and support the full implementation and potential expansion of these proposals. As a clinical psychologist who treated meth patients before coming to Congress, I know that rehabilitation is achievable and the return on investment is just as important to the individual as it is to society. I will continue to support the Administration's efforts to promote quality research and

development of treatment practices and urge you to more effectively communicate the results of that research to local treatment centers in every state.

I should also note that I am pleased that in previous Strategies the Administration has repeatedly highlighted the President's proposal for an increase in Drug Court Program funding. Programs such as these are effective for single-use and poly-drug users, and, in most cases, work to reconcile families. Other programs that are experiencing success include the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and Safe and Drug-Free Schools. These programs unite and mobilize our communities as well as encourage communication between parents, teachers, and children about the seriousness of drug use. I urge you to retain or expand Partnership for a Drug-Free America and Safe and Drug-Free Schools in the coming year.

Domestic Regulation of Chemicals

The willingness to work with Congress on lowering the federal limit on retail sales of pseudoephedrine was reflected in the 2005 Strategy, and I urge you to support implementation of this provision as passed by Congress either this year or in the coming year. We know that state efforts to curb the superfluous purchase of pseudoephedrine products have been successful at reducing supply and, consequently, the manufacture of meth. This pressure has virtually changed the market without severely disadvantaging the consumer — substitute medications are now made with phenylephrine, an ingredient that cannot be made into meth. We must continue to support and encourage the research and development of phenylephrine and similar ingredients that cannot easily be taken off the drugstore shelf and converted into synthetic drugs. As the synthetic drug market is ever-evolving, our ability to work with pharmaceutical companies and retailers to quickly respond to emerging drugs will become increasingly important.

International Coordination

As you may be aware, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), reports that the worldwide number of users of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) is higher than the number of heroin and cocaine users combined. The 2005 National Drug Control Strategy focused largely on addressing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and disrupting the heroin market. I encourage you to adopt a similar focus and commitment to foreign operations underway to disrupt the synthetic drug market, specifically coordinating with intelligence agencies both at home and abroad. I also encourage you to be more explicit in the 2006 Strategy about the nature and extent of efforts specifically focused on precursor control activities with other countries, similar to that which you provide in combating poppy production in Afghanistan or the Andean Counterdrug Initiative. The inclusion of the section on Targeting Synthetic Drugs in the 2005 Strategy is a step in the right direction. However, targeted funding for these programs and a commitment in the form of an organized international, interdiction strategy should be made explicit.

I have been working with the House Intelligence Committee to include language in the Intelligence authorization bill to direct the Director of Intelligence to focus narcotics intelligence resources on addressing foreign and domestic production and trafficking methamphetamine. I also asked that focus be given to tracking of methamphetamine precursors, specifically ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, and phenylpropanolamine, that may be used in the production of methamphetamine smuggled into the United States. I urge your support for the implementation of this provision when Congress passes the final conference report.

I also understand that global efforts to monitor and track the production and shipment of pseudoephedrine continue to be severely limited by a lack of resources and by the international classification of pseudoephedrine, which classifies it primarily in context with licit uses and not as a controlled substance. I urge you to work with UN bodies, such as the International Narcotics Control Board, to expand resources and seek a classification for pseudoephedrine that allows for better tracking of the production and shipment of pseudoephedrine. We need a clear plan of action and we must call upon our global partners to join with us.

Sincerely,

Brian Baird

Member of Congress

